



Pick Your Path to Health

Protecting Yourself at Home—Simple Tips to Keeping Intruders Away

A burglary occurs every 13 seconds. Your risk rises if you live in urban areas, if you rent rather than own your home, and if your home is usually unoccupied during the day. According to the Bureau of Justice statistics, 72 percent of burglaries are successful. If you want to keep your house - and everything in it safe, prevention is key. Here are some ways you can protect your home:

- Keep your lights programmed on a timer. Make sure to vary the times they click on so thieves won't notice a pattern and know you're using a timer.
- Put a dead-latch on your front door. This inexpensive lock-set keeps a burglar from slipping your door open with a plastic credit card.
- Have a neighbor collect mail and newspapers if you go away for an extended period. If you're going to be gone for a really long time, arrange to have the grass cut.
- Plant shrubs below ground-level windows, but keep them trimmed. If they grow above the windowsill, they can provide hiding places.
- Get a dog. Burglars usually run if they hear a barking dog. A "Beware of Dog" sign is better than nothing.
- Leave a radio playing when you're away from home. It helps give your house a lived-in feel. A few toys strewn about the front yard will do the same thing.
- Do not leave door keys under flower pots or doormats, inside an unlocked mailbox, over the doorway, or in other obvious places.
- The single lock on a garage door is inadequate to keep intruders from prying up the opposite side and crawling in. Use a padlock. Also keep the inside garage door leading into the house locked.
- Keep outside lights on at night. Install lights activated by motion.

- Engrave your belongings with an electric engraving pen. This helps deter robbery in two ways. First, you discourage the thief since marked property is much more difficult to sell. Second, if a thief does steal your property, it is much easier to catch and prosecute the person, if he or she is caught, when discovered with "marked" goods in his or her possession. Check with your police department to see if they prefer your name, driver's license number or social security number. Some law enforcement agencies will lend you an engraving pen for free. You can also buy one for about \$10 at the hardware store.
- Install a security system. Think about getting one to which you can add features like climate control and lighting. Also consider a system that provides more than security; power, temperature, and water sensors will notify of leaks or power outages. A security system sign displayed in front of your home may deter most burglars.
- Find out if neighbors rent or own. Homeowners are more likely to have a stake in the community's safety.
- Don't leave valuables (stereo, computer, jewelry, etc.) where they can be seen from the window. If you don't want to hide everything from sight, consider draperies and blinds.
- Don't leave anything around the yard that might help a burglar get into your house: put away ladders, stackable boxes, or garden tools.
- Secure sliding glass doors. Drill two holes on either end of the doorframe. Screw in two screws so that the sliding door can't be lifted off the track. In addition, wedge a piece of broom handle into the track by the floor. Your local hardware store may be able to help you.
- Basement windows are an easy target, since they're low and usually well hidden. Wedge a steel bar across the window, or install a metal grate.
- Can't afford an expensive security system? These Web sites make safety cheaper than ever: www.housecarers.com provides a world-wide database of house sitters. Membership is free. www.securitybase.com offers a large selection of safes, locks, and surveillance equipment at rock-bottom prices.

Even if you feel safe in your neighborhood, it's always smart to protect yourself and your loved ones. Taking simple steps to protect yourself at home will keep you on a path to better health.

Pick Your Path to Health is a national public health campaign sponsored by the Office on Women's Health within the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services. For more information about the campaign or to subscribe to the listserv to receive tips on improving your health, call 1-800-994-WOMAN or TDD at 1-888-220-5446 or visit the National Women's Health Information Center at www.4woman.gov. This article was developed through a partnership between the Office on Women's Health and the Wellness Warriors Network.